

STATE AID TO HIGHER EDUCATION.

BY

THE VERY REVEREND PRINCIPAL GRANT,

Queen's University, Kingston.

SOME years ago Toronto University announced through the Vice-Chancellor that its revenue was inadequate for its needs, and that it was about to demand more money from the Legislature that had already given it what used to be called "a magnificent endowment." The proposal seemed startling to those who had been contributing freely for years to the maintenance of universities doing precisely the same kind of work as Toronto, and in some directions certainly doing it better. They were willing that Toronto should have the advantage, in buildings and revenue, of an endowment, worth—in spite of the greatest mismanagement—nearly two millions, but that the Province should go on, indefinitely, doing its utmost to supplant private liberality, when it had been proved that one university was not enough for the needs of the country, seemed to them indefensible. What made the proposal all the more indefensible was that they could not shut their eyes to

the fact that the success of the other universities was the real motive of the new demand on the State. They were told that those institutions were actually "creeping up" to an equality of equipment with the one for which the State did everything. Such "leveling up," not at the public cost, but through private liberality, was an impertinence. The only way to put it down, and to maintain a due distance between the rightful heir and intruders was by getting another million or so from the Legislature for the one that stood on its dignity and did nothing for itself. This method of putting things right had everything to recommend it. No self-sacrifice was called for, except that which Artemus Ward declared himself willing to practise cheerfully. It would besides establish a precedent that would smooth away all future difficulties. Should any other university presume to go on developing, it would be easy to call for another million taken impartially from the pockets of the people, in

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cluding those who preferred universities of a freer type, and who were showing the depth of their preference or faith by their works.

The other universities protested. They would have been destitute of self-respect if they had kept silence. Besides, the proposal received no favour from the general public. It would have fallen still-born, even had Queen's, Trinity and Victoria uttered no word of protest. When it was found that an appeal for Toronto University alone would be made in vain, a roundabout method of accomplishing the object was tried. It was resolved to divide the opposition. It was repeatedly stated that "the Methodists were the key to the position." In other words, if Methodist opposition could be silenced, it was believed that sufficient political support could be obtained for something like the original proposal. The Minister of Education called a series of conferences, to which representatives or delegates from the four universities, as well as from several divinity schools in Toronto, were invited. Ostensibly as the result of these conferences, the so-called "Confederation Scheme" was drawn up. The truth of the matter is, that no progress whatever was made at the first two conferences, and so far as could be ascertained from conversations with the delegates, no one expected any to be made at the third and last. However, in the interval between the second and third, the Confederation Scheme was drawn up, as the result of private interviews and a private gathering of delegates who happened to be in Toronto. Great was the astonishment of the representatives of Queen's, when the Scheme was produced in printed form at the opening of the third conference. The Chancellor and myself, however, remained, giving what little help we could on the details of the Scheme that had been accepted

by the majority. The first glance had been enough to convince us that it was not intended for and would not suit Queen's. Still, it was our duty to do all that could be done, and then to submit the Scheme to our constituents without a word. After a few days' delay, insisted upon by us at the close of the conference, in order that we might have time to explain to the Trustees and Council of Queen's that we were in no way committed, the Scheme was given to the public. As soon as it was presented to our constituency it was unanimously rejected. The more it was canvassed, the worse it looked. Some of our professors who favoured Confederation in the abstract, utterly rejected this particular concrete. Men, who had never agreed on anything before, agreed in condemning this new model of a university. Everything that has occurred in the two years that have passed since, has convinced us that, in the interests of the country, in the interests of university education, and in the interests of Queen's, we took the right position.

Last September, the Methodist Conference decided that the Scheme would do for Victoria, and the Government promised the necessary legislation. Doubtless before this is printed, the proposed legislation will have been submitted to the House and be before the country. We have a right to hope that sufficient time will be given for consideration before it is voted on.

I have been asked by the Editor of THE EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY to state what attitude Queen's takes now. Though no meeting of the University Council or the Board of Trustees has been held since last September, I shall endeavour to comply with the request to the best of my ability.

Associations of graduates and of benefactors in different places have

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met, and resolved that, should the Legislature re-open the University Question, a one-sided solution can not be accepted. The city council of Kingston, has passed resolutions asking the Legislature to confine its efforts to the definite field of practical and applied science, and to establish a School of Science in Kingston, as an integral part of its University policy. It also officially invited the surrounding municipalities to pass resolutions to the same effect. The councils, both town and county, complied very generally with the invitation, and I accompanied a delegation from them, and from associations of the benefactors of Queen's that waited upon the Government, for the purpose of explaining that I for one thought the request of the municipalities for a School of Science in Kingston most reasonable, in the event of the Government proposing to do anything, and that it seemed to me that their suggestion could be accepted by Queen's as a fair compromise of its claims. Thus, while nothing has as yet been done officially by Queen's since it announced its decision on the Confederation Scheme to the Government in May, 1885, I understand pretty well the mind of those who may be considered the constituency of the University.

So far, then, as I have been able to gather their mind, they would prefer that the Legislature should not vote any more money for University education. They believe, with the Municipalities Committee, that "private endowment is apt to secure the best service at the least cost; that it is permanent, and not liable, like State aid, to change as the views of Governments or Legislatures may change, and that it calls forth the noblest attributes of human character." They have none but the friendliest feelings for Toronto University, though convinced that its

exceptional position has cultivated in some of its weaker graduates an arrogance of tone towards other institutions that is not usual in gentlemen and scholars. They are sure that Toronto University is fettered, stunted, kept back from anything like free and full development, by its connection with what must, under present conditions, be a Party Government. Besides, from what is reflected of the will of the average voter on the subject, they believe that the Legislature will do much less for University College and the proposed new University Professoriate than their friends declare to be necessary. If the Legislature would vote a million or two, they might be able to do what they consider necessary at present. If it voted nothing, they could appeal to their numerous graduates and the wealthy men who appreciate at its worth University education. But, if it votes only a trifle, then all that is likely to be accomplished will be the checking of voluntary contributions. The growth of Toronto University will to a certainty be arrested. Believing all this, they are inclined to wonder that the graduates of Toronto do not ask the Legislature to set it free from its present political bondage, with the provision that the Minister of Education and other official members should be kept on its Board of Management as an acknowledgment of the rights of the Province in the institution. They do not, indeed, wonder very much, because history shows that those who enjoy privilege are slow to surrender it, even when it hurts rather than helps, and they also remember how unwillingly Queen's surrendered the Provincial grant it once had, although no greater blessing ever befell it than the taking away of the said dole. They are all now conscious that it was a blessing in disguise, though they still resent the

offensive manner in which the thing was done, the short notice given, and the injustice shown to men whose salaries were dependent on the annual grant.

This then is the view taken by Queen's men generally of State Aid to Higher Education. But, should the Government insist upon re-opening the question, then they are quite clear that anything short of a comprehensive measure would be wantonly unjust. The public meeting held in Kingston, in January, 1885, as soon as "the Confederation Scheme" was published, adopted this view, but at the same time insisted that if the Government adopted anything like the scheme before them, it should be made comprehensive, and include Queen's in its operation. By the establishment of the proposed School of Science, Queen's would be included, in the way most calculated to serve, with due regard to economy, the material interests of the Province, and absolutely in accordance with the principle that Governmental control must be co-extensive with Governmental expenditure. But, since this proposal was made, oddly enough, two other cities, that were not even represented at the conferences, have discovered that they would each be greatly the better of a School of Science. No doubt they would. And it is not for me to contest their claims. The Government must decide each case on its own merits. But it ought to be enough to quote on this point the language of the memorial of the Municipalities Committee:—

"In no other place than Kingston is such a school required as a matter of equal justice to and for the safety and protection of a university, built up by the people themselves against what would be the outside aggression of the Government itself.

"In favour of no other place has a whole section of the country demanded it on these grounds.

"And in no other place than the seat of a well established university can it be placed with equal economy and certainty of success."

Those who disregard these facts have made up their minds beforehand, and are ready to catch at anything as an excuse for doing nothing.

Having thus tried to indicate our attitude, I may add that, so far as we are concerned, it matters little what course the Government may take. Happily, the sources to which Queen's owes her existence and steadily growing strength are quite independent of political parties or Government favour. Queen's has been for nearly half a century a practical protest against sectarianism, political and economic, and her persistency and independence in education. Victoria, for instance, has shown intolerance towards Queen's. But when she has thought of the future of the province, because there are people enough in

Canada who understand her worth, and who sympathize with her all the more when she does not receive fair play. All the responsibility is on the Government, and confessedly its path is beset with difficulty. The safe course, and, in the long run, perhaps the best for all parties, would be to do nothing, except to free the Provincial University. But, if something must be done, and the compact with Victoria requires the establishment of a new professoriate, how can Queen's be ignored? Confessedly the country has ratified our decision to remain at Kingston. Can any Government say: "We shall aid Victoria directly and indirectly because it comes to Toronto? We know that you ought not to come, but none the less must we ignore you. Our principles are limited to locality." A strong Government may say so, but the position cannot be held permanently. We may be able in the meantime only to protest, but a good many Canadians will not disregard our protest.